

TENNESSEE FOLKLORE SOCIETY BULLETIN

WILLIAM J. GRIFFIN, Editor
GEORGE PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS
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Cover Photograph: The photograph of Lester Flatt with Earl Scruggs and his 5-string banjo is used with the kind permission of the Nashville Tennessean.

THE TENNESSEE FOLKLORE SOCIETY

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HISTORY OF THE 5-STRING BANJO*

By

Louise Scruggs
Madison, Tennessee

No sound is more deeply rooted in American history than the thrilling ring of the banjo. Our national instrument seventy-five or a hundred years ago, it was played by many thousands of people. And yet by 1940 the instrument and the secrets of playing it had nearly died out. Modern Americans had almost forgotten the friendly, country ring of that fifth string until a group of young enthusiasts refused to let it die and once again began strumming on the ol' banjo.

Today the picture shines with new brilliance. The old-time banjo, and the wonderful music once played on it, are enjoying a new vogue. This American folk art was saved principally through the unreconstructed stubbornness of certain musicians in the Appalachian Mountains and the Carolinas, who simply paid no attention when they were told the banjo was dead.

The banjo has a romantic history to match its sparkling sound. The ancient ancestor of the banjo, an instrument called the rebec, originated in Arabia a thousand years ago and can still be purchased today in the larger marts of the Middle East. It consists of a skin head stretched over a gourd or hollow body, with a neck holding three gut strings.

The rebec was probably carried both east and west with the spread of Islam. Negro slaves brought it to the United States from North and West Africa. In his "Notes on the State of Virginia," published in 1785, Thomas Jefferson says the "banjar" was the principal musical instrument of the American Negroes.

By this time the banjo had developed into a four-string instrument. But the true "American Banjo" was not invented until about 1830 when a banjo enthusiast named Joe Sweeney made a small but a revolutionary modification. He added a fifth string, higher in pitch than any of the others, right next to the lowest pitched string, and secured by a peg mounted halfway up the neck.

This odd instrument, with four pegs at the top of the neck and one peg sticking out on the side, captured the heart of America. The five-string banjo is therefore sometimes called America's most original and distinctive musical invention.

Joe Sweeney, the inventor of the five-string banjo was born in Appomattox, Virginia, in 1810. He died at the home place in 1860. At an early age Sweeney organized his own Appomattox band. He composed many songs based on the melodies created by

*This paper was read at the Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Folklore Society on November 12, 1960.

the slaves he knew and loved. Billed as the "Banjo King," he made a hit on the New York stage after a wagon tour through the South and Pennsylvania. His fame carried him to England where he appeared before Queen Victoria at a command performance. Research has disclosed that what is believed to be "America's first banjo" is now in the possession of the Los Angeles County Museum in California.

The fifth string is the blend in the banjo. It is plucked by the thumb in various intricate and ingenious ways, while the other fingers are busy on the other four strings. No other instrument in the world is strung like the American five-string banjo, and entirely new playing methods were invented that are unique to the instrument.

Thousands of nameless Americans developed these playing methods during long evenings in log cabins, sod shanties, river steamboats, and gold-mining boom towns. The banjo went west in covered wagons and was enjoyed by both whites and Negroes throughout the nation. No two people had exactly the same method for working in that fifth string. For that matter, many people used four or five different tunings, and changed both the tunings and the style to play different songs.

Little music has ever been written for the banjo. Instead, a tremendous amount of lore developed, passed on from player to player. The old folks taught the young ones, and good players swapped style secrets. In a nation of rugged individualists, the banjo was an appropriately individualistic instrument!

Banjoists played "old time songs"--what we now call folk music. The popularity of the banjo was important in perpetuating and preserving many old folk songs that would otherwise have been forgotten. In addition, a special body of "banjo music" began to develop--and this, too, is now part of America's folk music heritage. For the most part, the authors of this music are virtually unknown, as are the inventors of the principal playing styles.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the banjo held its place in America's affections. But around the turn of the century a decline set in.

The advent of jazz was one important factor in this decline. Jazz musicians altered the banjo and the method of playing it in order to adapt it to the new jazz combos. Joe Sweeney's great fifth string was dropped off, completely killing the distinctiveness of the instrument. The neck was shortened, the head was enlarged, and heavier strings were used. The resulting four-string or "tenor" banjo was installed in jazz bands as a noise maker. The old finger-picking styles were abandoned along with the fifth string; a pick was used, and the instrument was expected to produce enough noise to be heard through a brass section.

In some cases, the change went even further. The instrument was reduced to mandolin size and was strung with eight strings, like a mandolin.

Such instruments, of course, did not sound even remotely like the brilliant old-time banjo. These innovations apparently signaled the death knell of the five-string banjo.

Only a few bands and a few natives of the more remote recesses of the South kept the old tradition going.

In the 1920's, when commercial recording companies put out their earliest folk discs, some of the remaining old-time banjo players were recorded. These records, once looked on as beneath the notice of "cultured" people, are now among our most important sources of American folk music. Before country or folk music became highly commercial, these performers played true folk songs. The master discs were destroyed long ago, and the records that survived are now rare, precious, and very costly collectors' items.

By 1930, even the four-string banjo was fading out. It was no longer used in jazz or popular music bands. As for the five-string instrument, fewer and fewer people remembered how to play it. America was on the verge of losing one of its most remarkable folk arts.

During these lean years, a few performers stuck stubbornly by their five-string banjos--certain players in old-time square dance bands in the southern mountains, and a few performers on country music radio shows such as the famous "Grand Ole Opry." Among the most famous of this era was Uncle Dave Macon from Readyville, Tennessee. "Uncle Dave," as he was affectionately known, was a rotund minstrel with gold teeth and a big gold watch chain, whose uninhibited performances on the five-string banjo was one of the Grand Ole Opry's best loved attractions.

However, by 1940, even the country music bands were dropping the five-string banjo, and apparently the end was in sight. The instrument was no longer even made. But by this time a few young purists and folklorists had discovered the five-string banjo and recognized it as one of our most remarkable contributions to the world's music. Several of them even went into the remote areas in the South and learned some of the playing styles and secrets from the few surviving players. These young folk musicians made some records with the five-string banjo. Almost as if by magic, the lost art was saved when it was on the brink of extinction.

Soon after World War II a few bands, perhaps influenced by the growing interest of folklorists, began to use the five-string banjo again.

Earl Scruggs, who is now one of the leaders of the Flatt & Scruggs show on the Grand Ole Opry, had developed a sparkling new playing style that was soon being imitated throughout the nation. Earl introduced what is now known as "Scruggs-Style Picking" on the Grand Ole Opry in 1945. Earl's father, who was also a banjo player, was his greatest inspiration to master playing the banjo. Earl first began playing tunes on the banjo when he was five years old. Instead of the style he now uses he could play with but one finger and thumb. At the age of ten he developed a three-fingered style, or that using two fingers and thumb, which later was to give him national acclaim. After his appearance on the Grand Old Opry his style spread rapidly, caught on like a craze, and he is now receiving more national acclaim than any other artist in the folk music field. (In 1952, Earl invented a tuning device that made the banjo even more versatile. The tuners are two extra pegs mounted on the peghead that enable the player to change the pitch while playing.)

In the New York Times last year (1959), Robert Shelton wrote, "Earl Scruggs bears about the same relationship to the banjo that Paganini does to the violin." In a later Times article, Shelton spoke of those superhuman qualities that have produced artists like Andres Segovia, Djanog Reinhardt, Charlie Byrd and Earl Scruggs.

An annual Folk Festival is held each year in Newport, Rhode Island, featuring the sophisticated version of folk music. The performance of Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs at Newport this year (1960) was lauded in the New York Times: "The act with the highest degree of professionalism was shown at Saturday night's concert by a group from Nashville, Tennessee--Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs."

Newsweek magazine has written that "the new aficionados discuss the merits of Earl Scruggs' three-fingered banjo playing as rabidly as jazzmen debate the far-out trumpet playing of Miles Davis."

Folk musicians have built up a following whose dedication begins to rival that of the most fervent jazz buffs. Indoor concerts are being held across the nation. It is not unusual to see artists play to filled halls holding 1,000 to 4,000 people. Furthermore, the bulk of the attendance comes from colleges and large urban centers.

Earl Scruggs is credited with creating this veritable banjo epidemic, and is responsible for the upsurge of interest in folk music. The Vega Company in Boston, Massachusetts, is now manufacturing twelve different styles of banjos. Two of these models were designed by Scruggs. Time magazine reports also that banjo sales have increased over 300 per cent in the last two years.

And, perhaps most important of all, the scraps and fragments of the old style playing of the old songs, and the pure authentic sound of the old mountain banjo, have now been preserved forever on long playing records. Several recording companies have sent teams with tape recorders into the remote recesses of the South and have issued commercial long-playing records of some of the old-timers who are still living. Such an album has been issued by Folkways Records and titled American Banjo: Songs and Tunes in Scruggs Style.

Another of the popular old-time banjo styles is called beating, frailing or thumbing the banjo. The basic strum consists of a combination of both picking individual strings and strumming whole chords. Such performers on the Grand Ole Opry who use this style are Grandpa Jones, Stringbean, and Oswald.

It is a thrilling and moving experience to hear the older versions of folk music. Today the whole nation is aware of the great mass of lore that the folk have provided and still provide. In the vast Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., there is stored a huge collection of phonograph records of folk songs and ballads. Preserved in record form, these songs can be heard by lovers of folklore long after the artists who sing them are gone.

American universities have sent their folklore scholars into the neighborhoods where groups of certain national characteristics live in order to more fully understand

their folklore. These reports help us to understand all the people who make up America. Knowledge of a nation's folklore is knowledge of the creative workings of the minds of its folk. It is a key to a nation's value, a highway that leads into the heart of its people.

America owes much to these folklorists and to the grand old players of the five-string banjo who held staunch against the tide, who preserved a precious and wonderful American heritage when nobody else cared.

JUST AN APRIL FOOL

By

Kelsie B. Harder
Youngstown University
Youngstown, Ohio

April Fool's Day has lost much of its former fun-making activity. Schoolchildren and adults have little time or opportunity to carry out some of the spontaneous, sometimes elaborate, jokes that once were a part of All Fools' Day. In Perry County, Tennessee, April 1 used to be a day for one to beware of, to be on guard for, and, in fact, to be peculiarly prepared for. It was a day when the quietest, most retiring little girl might stick a hatpin through the crack in a school bench and into the flesh of the loud, big, tom-boyish girl in front of her, causing a commotion that would upset the classroom and the teacher. The explanation would be, "It was just an April Fool."

The badgering of a disliked boy by the chant of "April Fool, April Fool, April Fool," while the tormentors danced in a ring about the frustrated victim, is a situation that one, looking back with hindsight, would not like to see or hear repeated. Finding one's clothes tied in hard knots on the morning of April 1 is another experience that is not looked back upon with much relish. The shout from downstairs of "April Fool, April Fool" perhaps did mitigate the seriousness, but the clothes still had to be untied.

And, of course, revenge had to be planned and executed. It might take the form of putting salt--or quinine--in coffee or milk. It might take a more dangerous form, such as undoing the throat-latch of the harness on a particularly wild mule so that the one who was driving it would be in some difficulty in straightening out the messy situation of tangled ropes, chains, and perhaps the plow, not to mention the catching of the mule and the salving of rope-burned hands. Or, as I have seen on one frightening occasion, revenge might take the form of allowing a tree to fall toward the unsuspecting person without warning until the last possible moment. The result was not disaster, but it almost was. There was no more April foolishness the rest of that day. Just the same, anyone who perpetuated on April Fool could expect retaliation in kind and more.

Another tradition connected with April was the April Fool letters. These letters were composites of prankishness, deception, absurdity, folk verses, and, I suspect, love.

The letters were never signed, but girls, apparently, made a game of trying to guess who sent them. To receive an April Fool letter during April, for they could be sent anytime during the month, was deemed a most flattering honor and the contents were shared among envious acquaintances, who, in this case, could hardly be called friends.

Two such letters dated 1908 were given to me by an elderly woman in Perry County. During a folklore discussion, she recalled the custom of April Fool letters and said that she had saved two of them. They are given below with original punctuation and spelling, but the names throughout have been changed.

Letter #1

Sugarville Tenn

Apr 40 / 08

Miss Susie Wilson

Dear Sweetheart.

I seat myself on a stool. to write you an April fool. You know I love you without me telling you that But I must tell you what love is it is inward inwardness, outward, outwardness, all over, everlastedness, a durn Piece of foolishness Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! hee! I heard that you was at meeting a Sunday Well Darling I wish I had been there so I could have seen You maybe you would have went home with me for this is leep Year you Know

say Honey you Dont know how well I love you but I can tell You I love once I love you twice I love You better than cats love mice But that dont make much difference Come down and we will H A V E. 1 of the Longest talks. U. Ever did see

Listen now. This fact is truth or truth belied no woman yet was ever tongue tied so I know you can talk

Lime stone water and cedar wood
A kiss from you would do me good
so good By
Honey

Be good at home And Better abroad
Love your sweetheart And serve the Lord
As I do not live in town

Ans. soon

Just Back your letters to a hole in the ground.
Wait a minute I liked to forgot will You Marry me Or will you Not

Letter #2

April 20th 1908
Remember Me Always

Hello Miss Susie

How are you today all o. k. I hope, I thought I would write you an April fool Now Miss Susie you must ans this for it is going to be a good one. My aim is to come to see you never I get able I fell in love with you and it broke both of my arms off. Oh My Susie I sure love you. it nearly breaks my heart to think that you dont care for me. You are so pretty I think of you all the day and dream of you at night. ha Ha. and Miss Susie I am pritty too you ought to see me. You would fall in love with me sure my eyes are like the stars in heaven and they stand out like pipe stems. and if you see any boy of this Description passing by. you must hail him in. for he loves you.

You I love and will ever

You may change but I will never.

And here is another verse you see I am very sharp.

You can go with J. T. F.

But if you do you will be Deft

And if you live by his side

You will sure be Tongue-tide

Think of me early

think of me late

When you see me coming

meet me at the gate

Although April Fool's Day has lost its original impish spirit, it still lives in the minds of those who participated in its pranks. These people are now older, but when the first of April appears on the calendar they recall, with some of the verve of other days, the festive foolishness compounded in the name of all fools. For some of us who have been on the receiving end of especially irksome tricks, we would rather recall than live through them again.

A COLLECTION OF FOLK TALES FROM SOPHOMORES
IN CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE, HIGH SCHOOL

Reported by

Emma Jean Caroland

EDITOR'S NOTE: Clarksville High School is attended by students who live in the city, in the surrounding county, and in the housing facilities at Fort Campbell. Many of these students and their parents have always lived in Montgomery County, while others, especially those from Fort Campbell, have lived in many different states.

In the fall of 1958, Miss Caroland (as a project in a folklore course at Austin Peay State College) asked the four hundred sophomores in Clarksville High School to report to her any items of folklore they knew of or could learn of by talking to their parents, relatives, or neighbors. Sixty-two sophomores responded to her request. The reports they made were most frequently related to superstitions about good and bad luck, planting signs, cures and such matters. Some other categories of folklore were also represented, however. The area of folktales was represented by the eight short narratives presented below. The number at the end of each story refers to the informant identified in the list that follows this collection.

It is appropriate to remark in connection with the last three stories that Montgomery County is contiguous to Robertson County, which is most frequently associated with the Tennessee legends of the Bell Witch. 7

1

Exactly a year before my great-grandfather, Elijah Wilson Powers, died, a very strange happening occurred to him. He was a respected member of the community and also a very religious man, not accustomed to seeing visions or being afraid of anything.

His wife was not at home, and his son, who lived nearby, was away also. Being alone, he went to bed early. He was suddenly awakened by the figure of a woman walking across the room toward him. Naturally he at first thought that this was his wife, Mary, who was in the habit of walking in her sleep. Then he remembered that his wife was not at home. As the thing drew nearer, he saw that it had a hideous face and wore a long, flowing robe. He began asking, "Who are you and what do you want?" He got no response. The creature slowly came nearer him, but, instead of trying to get away, he moved toward it. This seemed to frighten it, and it ran through the door.

When his son came home, he found Grandpa Powers sitting in his room looking very frightened. When he was asked what was wrong, Grandpa told his son about the apparition he had seen. He insisted that this was a sign of his death, and that he would die a year from that time.

Nearly a year later my mother, who was only six or seven years old, overheard him tell a member that he would not be able to come to church any more. Wondering what he meant, she told her family about what she had heard. During that week he got sick and had to remain in bed for the rest of his life. He died exactly a year from the time of the vision. (2)

2

Several years ago two employees of the funeral parlor in Clarksville went to Dover to pick up a corpse. On the way back the fellow that was driving stopped at a restaurant and went in for a cup of coffee. While they were stopped, a soldier asked the other man in the hearse if they were going to Clarksville, and if so, could he have a ride. The man said that he could, but there wasn't any room in the front so he would have to ride in the back with the body. The soldier said he would go and got in the back.

When the Negro driver got back from drinking his coffee, his companion forgot to tell him that he had picked up a soldier. As they were riding down the road the soldier slid the glass partition back. He tapped the Negro on the shoulder and asked if it was all right to smoke back there. It scared the driver so badly that he jumped out of the hearse with it still moving, and he hasn't been heard from since. (7)

3

This is a true story of Civil War times in Montgomery County. Mr. Smoot was overseer on a farm owned by the Weatleys, a family originally from Vermont. A few years prior to the Civil War, they thought best to go back to Vermont. When they sold the farm, the new owner kept Mr. Smoot on as overseer. Mr. Smoot lived alone. One cold morning a neighbor dropped by and found Mr. Smoot half eaten by hogs in the hog pen. A coroner's inquest was called, but mystery still surrounds the circumstances of his death. Now his ghost haunts the house and grounds. The most common thing is his lantern moving between the hog pen and the house. (5)

4

There was a man who had a bad heart and had been having blackouts. When he had the blackouts, no one could tell if he were dead or alive. He said that when he died, a telephone would be put in his coffin, so if he were really alive he could get help.

He soon had another blackout, and the people were sure that he was dead. They did put a telephone in the man's coffin, though. He was buried, and then he awakened from his blackout. Knowing where he was, the man tried to call his doctor on the phone. The line was busy every time he called. He pulled his hair out and bit his arms until he died. The line was busy because the doctor's wife had left the phone off the hook, and he couldn't get the doctor. (6)

This story was supposed to have taken place in South Carolina, outside of Fort Jackson and Columbia, in a small district called Forest Acres.

It seems there was a rich family living in the area. They had a boy, who when he was born looked like any other child, but as he grew older, he got bigger and bigger than ordinary. He was also very mean.

Once when his father bought him a pony, the boy broke its back with his hand. It soon became evident that they would have to put him away from other people. So the father had a building constructed of steel and concrete.

The boy was now eight feet tall and very dangerous.

One night the boy bent the steel bars and escaped. He then went into the area of the shopping center, and that night he killed a man in an alley.

The next morning the man was found with almost every one of his bones broken.

In the next few days more bodies were found in much the same way. The police then started patrolling the area with the help of some soldiers from Fort Jackson.

After a while, a soldier finally saw him one night. The soldier had a rifle just in case of trouble, and he started sneaking up on him from the back. All of a sudden, the soldier stepped on a twig that crackled. The overgrown child turned quickly around and fell dead. The child had been frightened to death by the sound of the twig.

None of the graveyards would let the family bury the body in them. So the father had a small building constructed in the swamp where the body could be placed.

Nothing else came of this until about five years later when at a party three rich men dared a famous explorer to go to the place where the child was buried and put a dagger into his chest. So in order to save his reputation, the explorer accepted.

He went on horseback, and he carried with him a lantern and the dagger. As he was riding along through the swamp, a shadow seemed to come up from the ground. The shadow scared the horse and it reared up and threw the man off. The horse was gone, so the man continued on foot. As he went on, a sudden gust of wind put out his lantern. Now he was becoming frightened, but he managed to go on. He finally came to where the body was. He went inside and opened the casket. As he did this, a hand reached up and grabbed him and jerked him into the coffin. The coffin closed and the explorer was never seen again.

Before the explorer went to stab the body an old man and woman who lived out in the swamp would see, every night, a long shadow of a man moving out in the swamp. After the explorer disappeared, they said they still saw the shadow, but by its side was a shadow of a regular sized man. (1)

6

It seems that Mr. X was driving late one afternoon in the vicinity of Port Royal. He suddenly saw a form floating in front of his car. It appeared to be the figure of a woman in a nightgown high up in the air. He has no proof that it was the Bell Witch, but he assumed so since it was the right place (Port Royal).

There is some remote connection between his family and the Bell family.

The peculiar thing about this is that the witch was supposed to return about one hundred years after her disappearance. It was about that time when he saw her. (3)

7

The following story was sworn to be true by a Mrs. Andrew Abernathy.

One day while she was visiting the Bell house, the family and she were sitting around the fire when a burning piece of coal rolled from the fire and to the feet of Mrs. Bell and lay still. Then it rolled to Mrs. Abernathy's feet and stopped. Again it moved, and this time to the feet of each person in the room and lay still for a moment, and then as suddenly as it came, it rolled back into the fire. The strange part was that there were no burned spots on the rug or floor. (4)

8

A member of the Bell family was attempting to make butter. She had been churning for at least twenty minutes but to no avail. Finally she poured boiling water into the churn. At the instant she did this, a terrible scream came from within the churn. The next time the Bell witch appeared to the family her hand was bandaged. She said she had been burned by boiling water. (4)

Informants

- (1) Raymond Clifford heard this story beside a campfire in South Carolina.
- (2) Sue Hayes collected this story from Mrs. Hartwell Hayes, who has always resided in Tennessee.
- (3) Phil Mayhew got this story from a person who did not wish to be named but who gave his home as Port Royal.
- (4) Carolyn McFall collected the stories she reported from Mrs. Hartwell Marable, whose home is in Clarksville.
- (5) Betty Lu Strassheim got this story from from Hamner, whose home is in Clarksville.
- (6) Judy Vaden heard this story from her sister, Nancy Vaden, who has always lived in Clarksville.
- (7) Jan Walker got this story from her father, whose home is in Clarksville.

IN MEMORIAM: GEORGE CALVIN GRISE

By

George W. Boswell
Morehead State College
Morehead, Kentucky

Education, Tennessee folklore, and humanity lost a brilliant and useful partisan when Dr. George C. Grise was killed in a crash on the highway near his home in Montgomery County last December 30.

I first met George Grise in Dr. Riley's Southern Life and Literary Culture class at Peabody College twelve years ago. Two years later we became colleagues in the English Department at Austin Peay State College and remained such for ten years. During that time, in daily contact with him, my early admiration of his wit and personality matured into deep appreciation of the profounder elements of his character: his love of his home, his attractive family, literature, music, his church, and his fellowman.

His services to folklore included, among other activities, publication of articles in our Bulletin and other journals, performance with his autoharp at many program meetings of our Society, preparation of incomparable Resolutions read to our business meetings, service as President of the Society in 1957 and 1958, ballad programs over WSM, and authorship of Life with Hezzie.

Dr. Grise was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, September 1, 1918. One is reminded by his youth of another former president of the Tennessee Folklore Society, Charles F. Bryan, who was little older at the time of his death. Removal of venerable leaders--Dr. Charles Pendleton, L. L. McDowell, Dr. George Pullen Jackson--was damaging enough; but a cry of "Unfair!" may almost be raised to Nemesis at the loss of a young, vital, vibrant folklorist and educator of so much promise.

WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?

(Anyone who knows of an event or activity that ought to be listed in this department of the Bulletin is urged to write to the Editor, William J. Griffin, at George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville 5, Tennessee.)

I. Folk Festivals, Seminars and Workshops, and Other Meetings of Folklore Groups

March 3-5, 1961. Seventeenth Annual New England Folk Festival, at Cousens Gym, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts.

March 18, 1961. Inter-collegiate Folk Festival, at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire. Information: Miss Ann Milligan, Smith Hall, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N. H.

April 7, 1961. Spring Meeting of the Kentucky Folklore Society, at Breaux Hall, First Unitarian Church, Louisville, Kentucky. Information: Dr. D. K. Wilgus, Western State College, Bowling Green, Ky.

April 7-9, 1961. Country Square Dance Weekend, at East Hill Farm Inn, Troy, New Hampshire. Information: Mr. Parker Whitcomb, Troy, N. H.

April 14, 15, 1961. Square Dance Festival, at Houston Texas. Information: Houston Parks and Recreation Department, Houston, Texas.

May 5-7, 1961. Florida Folk Festival, at Outdoor Theatre, Stephen Foster Memorial Park, White Springs, Florida. Information: Miss Thelma Boltin, Director of Special Events, Stephen Foster Memorial Commission, White Springs, Fla.

May 17-19, 1961. National Folk Festival, at Convention Hall, Washington, D. C. Information: Sarah Gertrude Knott, 2310 Ashmeade Place, N. W., Washington 9, D.C.

May 20, 1961. New Hampshire Folk Federation Folk Festival, at Contoocook High School, Contoocook, New Hampshire.

June 28-July 1, 1961. National Square Dance Convention, at Detroit, Michigan. Information: Box 2314, Detroit 3, Michigan.

August 28-Sept. 3, 1961. Fourteenth Annual Conference of the International Folk Music Council, at Laval University, Quebec City, Canada. Information: Miss Renée Landry, Canadian Folk Music Society, National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; or Miss Maud Karpeles, Secretary, International Folk Music Council, 35 Princess Court, Queensway, London, W. 2, England.

II. Tennessee Crafts and Craftsmen. (See the Bulletin for March, 1960, pp. 20-24.)

III. Competition Deadlines

April 15, 1961. Entries of folklore studies or collections to be considered for the Chicago Folklore Prize (cash award of about \$50.00) must be submitted to the Chairman of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, the University of Chicago, 1050 East 59th Street, Chicago, Illinois.

EVENTS AND COMMENTS

APOLOGETICALLY, it must be noted that there was an error in the name of the writer of the essay on "Mountain People" as given at the head of the leading article in the December, 1960, Bulletin. The writer should have been properly identified as Mrs. Mary Anderson Tutweiler.

READERS MAY HAVE NOTED that the index to Vol. XXVI of the Bulletin was not included in the December issue of that volume, as customary editorial practice may have led them to expect. It will be found in the last pages of the present issue, and hereafter it will be the policy to run in the March number an index of the Bulletins of the preceding year.

THE FOLLOWING LETTER was received by the Editor shortly after the Annual Meeting of the Society.

My dear fellow members of the Tennessee Folklore Society:

I wish to express my deep and sincere thanks to you for your most generous offer of \$300.00 toward the publication of Tennessee Folksongs. It comes at a time when it can serve the purpose of encouragement as well as a more material purpose.

I have selected, edited, and prepared texts and tunes for photographic reproduction of hundreds of Tennessee folk songs. Even so, it is such a big job that to achieve the completeness that I desire will require at least several more months. Be patient with me, but be assured that I appreciate the financial help more than I can say.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

George W. Boswell, Ph.D.
Chairman, Languages and
Literature, Morehead State College

MEMBERS OF TFS who took part in the various sessions of the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Philadelphia on December 27-29 were Herbert Halpert and Frank Hoffman. Marie Campbell, long a member of our Society, read a paper on "The Classical Myths in Oral Tradition." One of the liveliest sessions in the program was a panel on "Folk Literature and the Obscene."

SARAH GERTRUDE KNOTT has announced the founding and incorporation of the National Folk Festival Association, the present official address being the John Kilpen Hotel, 2310 Ashmead Place, N. W., Washington 9, D. C. No doubt, the Association will welcome all the support, including financial contributions, from any individuals or groups who approve of the work Miss Knott has been doing in the face of constant difficulties.

LEONARD ROBERTS has added to the accumulating body of published Kentucky folk tales a report of a Type 314 story which he calls "Jack in the King's Army." It may be found in the Winter issue (XXXVI, 4) of Mountain Life and Work.

A MEMORIAL TO JOSIAH COMBS was offered in the October-December, 1960, issue (VI, 4) of the Kentucky Folklore Record.

THE FIRST TWO VOLUMES of Folk-Lore, an annual publication by The Center of Folk-Lore, The Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, Cairo, Egypt, have been received by the Editor of the Bulletin. Most of the text is in Arabic, but some articles are written in French and others, such as "A Study of the Arabian Nights," by Dr. Suhair El Kalamawi, are in English.

A WELL ILLUSTRATED article on the folk art of lace-making in Sweden is to be found in current issue (XLIII, 4) of Rig.

A DISCUSSION of the folk art aspect of paper-folding will be included in the introduction to The Art of Origami, which is to be published by Dutton in May. The author is Professor Samuel Randlett, who is a member of the Music Department of Fisk University.

FOLK DANCING IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC is the subject of a report by Hugh Thurston in Northern Junket, VII, 3.

THE DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS has announced that it will publish this month the sixth volume of the Frank C. Brown Collection. The volume, the first of two that will bear the title of Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina, is edited by Wayland D. Hand. The price is \$10.00.

AMONG THE TALES FROM POLAND recorded in the December, 1960, issue (V, 4) of Polish Folklore, perhaps the most interesting is that of "The Kielbasa Fence," a version of the story of the man who protects himself from the consequences of having a secret revealed by his wife by leading her to report such outrageous stories that nobody will under any circumstances credit what she says.

A USEFUL BIBLIOGRAPHY of "Folk Tales for Children" prepared by Barbara K. Walker may be found in the Autumn, 1960, issue (XVI, 3) of the New York Folklore Quarterly. The same issue contains an interesting article by Leslie A. Field on the use of folklore by Thomas Wolfe.

THE FALL, 1960, ISSUE (III, 3) of The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist offers detailed instructions prepared by George List on the subject of "Documenting Recordings."

DO-IT-YOURSELF MEDICINE is getting another shot in the arm. Not to be outdone by his New England colleague who found a sovereign cure in honey and vinegar, Dr. John E. Eichenlaub has published A Minnesota Doctor's Home Remedies for Common and Uncommon Ailments (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Parker Publishing Co., \$4.95 plus postage). Some of the ailments mentioned in the invitation to buy the volume are arthritis, arteriosclerosis, ulcers, gall bladder trouble and sexual complaints. Dr. Eichenlaub quotes the testimonial of one of his patients: "Just reading your book made me feel better." It appears that there's no point in doctors getting all lathered up about Socialized Medicine. The "apple-cheeked great-grandmas and bright-eyed great grandpas" in the "rugged Minnesota countryside" can tell us how they quite simply "keep their heart, digestion, and all vital organs going strong until they are ninety years old." They ought to be able to take care of most of our health problems without assistance from the government--or from doctors either.

SING OUT!, "The Folk Song Magazine," has published a special 96-page 10th anniversary issue that is accompanied by a 7-inch long-playing record containing the first verse and chorus for every song in the issue.

IN ADDITION TO a "Bibliography of New England-Maritimes Ffolklore" for 1959 and a report on "Counting-Out Rhymes from Shelburne County, Nova Scotia," Northeast Folklore presents in its Summer, 1960, issue (3, 2) the memories Dean J. W. Ashton (Indiana University) has of "Marble-Playing in Lewiston Fifty Years Ago." The topic recalls to mind Kelsie B. Harder's "Vocabulary of Marble Playing" in the Publication of the American Dialect Society, No. 23, April 1955. Consultation of Harder's glossary confirms the observation that the meaning of taws as reported by Dean Ashton is an unusual one.

Walter Womack, McMinnville at a Milestone. McMinnville, Tennessee: Standard Publishing Co. and Womack Printing Co., 1960.

McMinnville at a Milestone, by Walter Womack is an effective compilation of historical, legendary, and regional materials. As an anniversary volume celebrating the formation and development of Warren County and McMinnville, it comprehends many facets contributing to the progress of the region. The arrangement first deals broadly with topographical and historical trends which tie the locale in with the objectiveness and purpose of the surrounding area, and then re-enforces the study with chapters of more minute details for those who may have a specific or localized folk interest. The study at many points is graphically interpreted with early maps, drawings, and pictures which not only show contrast but add effectiveness and meaning.

Warren County was established through an Indian Treaty of 1806 and an Act of the General Assembly signed November 26, 1807, which divided White County, of which Warren had been tentatively a part. The Caney Fork River became, and is, the line of division. Lying, as the area did, at the fringe edge of the Cumberland Settlements and along Indian trails which skirted the Cumberlands from the Indian territories of East Tennessee by way of Wartrace, by way of the Black Fox Trail over the mountains, or by way of the Immigrant Trail from Southwest Point to Sparta and the valley where these converged with the Old Kentucky Road, it at once became the scene of momentous and moving events. The Caney Fork, which empties into the Cumberland, has been consistently important to the area's development.

Chapters IV and V broadly outline the early establishment of McMinnville, its promotional settlers, early water-powered industries, important hotels such as the Warren House or Sedberry, the handling of early mails, the inns and stage stops, early banks and their successes and failures, the building of the Manchester and McMinnville Railroad, important ferries and bridges across the Caney Fork and at other points, public and private academies, educators, early doctors, and many important leaders of the various professions and the military. Each of these areas is then typed into its present pattern of varied progress.

It is probably that there were no permanent settlers before 1792 or 1793, when the Indian Battle was fought at Rock Island, but after 1800 important land claims were made. Many of the names which have carried down through the years are Hill, Bess, Bouldin, Martin, Dykes, Cartwright, Tate, Fults, Nunley, and others. Somewhat later the names of Hillis, Smartt, Nelson, Black, Gordon, Witcher, Faulkner, Anderson, Lusk, Rodgers, and Terry were among those to be perpetuated in the area's development. The first county court of White County was organized and held in the home of Joseph Terry, south of the river.

Villages grew up at transportation centers where there was usually a trading post or store. Rock Island was one of the more important of these early villages. Viola, Irving College, Morrison, Smartt, Dibrell, Centertown, and Campaign are other such centers. These serve communities largely devoted to stock-growing, fruit-raising, and general agriculture. Most are located on highways which today serve tourist demands. The churches, primarily Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian, have been basically essential to the area's orthodox development. McMinnville has made great strides in the many areas of its education program.

The author states in his "Foreword" that "Our aim was to present some of the history of the growth and progress of our town and county . . . and to leave to others the task of writing a more complete and comprehensive history of the area." The implication here that the volume is to be primarily useful has been abundantly justified.

--E. G. Rogers
Tennessee Wesleyan College

"The Weavers," eds., The Weavers' Song Book. New York: Harpers, 1960. \$5.95.
xiii + 177 pp.

In a handsomely printed and honestly edited volume, "The Weavers" have made available a collection of eighty-two of their favorite songs which might be described as "folk-based." These are properly called their songs, for "The Weavers" have assumed the liberty of adapting melodies, sometimes combining songs, altering the wording, and even expanding texts. In performing these operations, they have boldly and openly followed the practice that, of course, has often been pursued timidly, furtively, with implication or overt denial that it has been engaged in.

Though most of these songs are English and American in origin, some come from other parts of the world such as India, Africa, Yugoslavia, and Germany; texts are given in Spanish, Hebrew, German, and other languages in which the songs are usually sung. The items in the book are generally grouped in the order in which they are presented on "The Weavers'" Vanguard records, and hence will appear to the casual reader to have no order at all. For the convenience of those who like an organization according to subjects or themes, a classified index is provided, making use of the following categories: "Of Work and the Way Things Are," "Of Loving and Lovers," "Of Fun and Play," "Of Ideas and Ideals." The music of the songs has been arranged for piano and guitar by Robert De Cormier. Brief explanations of the representation and playing of guitar chords are provided.

One of the engaging features of this book is the four-page summary in the introductory pages, which is titled "Ten Years with the Weavers." It tells, without much embroidery or sentimentality, of the origin of the group, of the selection of the name by which it is known, of the individuals that have been associated with it, of their views about folksong, and something of their experiences in various parts of the world. The prediction is made that "The time is surely at hand when the word 'strange' will be obsolete as applied to the folk culture of any of the peoples of the world."

--W. J. G.

José Alcina Franch, ed., Bibliografía Básica de Arqueología Americana. Seville: Seminario de Antropología Americana, 1960. 124 pp. Multigraphed.

This is the first volume in a series projected as annual publications of the Seminario de Antropología Americana at the University of Seville. The present bibliography is a

The editor, in his introduction, stresses the fact that this volume is intended to be not exhaustive but (as the word "basic" in the title implies) selective. It omits reference to older works, for example, if they have been superseded by later publications. This reviewer is not competent to judge the adequacy of the coverage of the field of American archeology, but he is able to observe that the 1232 items listed relate to a great variety of publications both in this hemisphere and in Europe. The material is carefully organized. Following a general section on paleolithic America, the order of topics is geographical, covering the area from the arctic to the Southern tip of South America.

--W. J. G.

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of

The Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin

(Note: This index, prepared with the probable interests of readers in mind, is more than a composite table of contents for Volume XXVI, but it is not intended as a complete concordance. Attention is called to the collection of items under headings of "Book Reviews" and "Tennessee Folklore Society.")

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